

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 11704

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR MISNUMBERED PARA 3 THRU-OUT TEXT

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, EG, IS

SUBJ: ISRAELI ACTION AGAINST AMOCO RIG

REF: (A) STATE 216025 (TOSEC 250005), (B) DAY-EILTS

TELECON, (C) CAIRO 11702, (D) CAIRO 11703

1. IMMEDIATELY AFTER DAY-EILTS TELECON, I TELEPHONED FAHMY TO TELL HIM THAT WE WERE URGENTLY COMMUNICATING WITH ISRAELIS TO ASK THEM TO COOL IT. AS HE WOULD UNDERSTAND, THE ISSUE IS A LEGAL ONE, BUT OUR IMMEDIATE CONCERN WAS THE AMERICAN LIVES THAT MIGHT BE ENDANGERED BY A POSSIBLE CONFRONTATION. WE WERE ASKING THE ISRAELIS TO HOLD OFF TAKING ANY ACTION AGAINST THE AMOCO RIG. BY THE SAME TOKEN, AND WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO GOE'S LEGAL POSITION, WE WERE ASKING GOE ALSO TO COOL IT AND TO ALLOW AMERICANS TO LEAVE THE RIG. ALTHOUGH I DID NOT YET HAVE REFTTEL A, AND DID NOT THEREFORE SPECIFICALLY ASK THAT THE EGYPTIAN GUNBOATS BE WITHDRAWN, I STRESSED THAT WE COULD NOT RPT NOT ACCEPT AMERICANS BEING JEOPARDIZED IN SUCH AN INCIDENT. I ALSO EMPHASIZED TO FAHMY THAT THE MARINER CASE SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO
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JEOPARDIZE SINAI II AND WHAT IT HAS ACHIEVED. I TOLD

HIM, AS I HAD BEFORE, THAT WE CONTINUE TO BE INVOLVED IN TALKS WITH THE ISRAELIS ABOUT THE LEGAL ISSUE OF AMOCO'S DRILLING RIGHTS IN THE GULF AND FULLY UNDERSTAND GOE'S LEGAL POSITION, BUT THAT THE SAFETY OF AMERICAN LIVES HAD TO BE AN OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION AT THE PRESENT TIME.

2. FAHMY WAS CLEARLY DISAPPOINTED. HE INSISTED THAT GOE WAS WITHIN ITS LEGAL RIGHTS IN ASKING AMOCO TO KEEP THE VESSEL THERE. ANYTHING SHORT OF THAT, INCLUDING EVACUATION OF THE CREW, WOULD PLAY INTO ISRAELI HANDS AND WEAKEN GOE POSITION. IT WAS NOT GOE WHICH HAD STARTED THE INCIDENT. AMOCO, ON MINPET'S INSTRUCTIONS, WAS SIMPLY CARRYING OUT ITS LEGAL OBLIGATIONS IN THE EGYPTIAN OIL FIELD OF RAMADHAN. IT WAS THE ISRAELIS WHO HAD STARTED THE ISSUE. I AGAIN PRESSED HIM ON ALLOWING THE CREW TO BE EVACUATED. HE OBJECTED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF GIVING WAY IN THE FACE OF THE ISRAELI THREAT, BUT DID NOT SPECIFICALLY SAY "NO." HE ALSO DENIED THAT GOE IS PREVENTING AMOCO/CAIRO FROM COMMUNICATING WITH THE RIG AND ARGUED ANY COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS AMOCO MIGHT BE HAVING ARE DUE TO ATMOSPHERICS. HE MADE IT CLEAR THE MATTER IS IN GAMASY'S HANDS AND THAT GAMASY WOULD TALK TO ME ABOUT IT LATER TODAY. HE SAID HE COULD SAY NO MORE. MY SUBSEQUENT EFFORTS TO CONTACT GAMASY WERE UNSUCCESSFUL.

3. I THEN GOT IN TOUCH WITH ROSS CRAIG TO INQUIRE RE LATEST INFO ON STATUS OF THE MARINER. BARKER OF SANTA FE AND OTHER SENIOR AMOCO OFFICIALS WERE WITH HIM. CRAIG SAID AMOCO WAS NOT BEING PREVENTED FROM COMMUNICATING WITH THE MARINER. THE ONLY RESTRICTION GOE HAD PLACED ON COMMUNICATIONS IS THAT NO RPT NO SECURITY MATTERS MIGHT BE DISCUSSED. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS, AMOCO HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE MARINER, WHOSE SKIPPER WAS AWARE OF EARLIER INSTRUCTIONS. THE ISSUE, SO FAR AS SANTA FE AND AMOCO ARE CONCERNED, WAS GOE'S INSISTENCE THAT (A) THE RIG SHOULD REMAIN ON LOCATION AND (B) THE CREW SHOULD NOT BE EVACUATED. SANTA FE AND AMOCO HAD DECIDED THAT, SUBJECT TO THE

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DECISION OF THE RIG'S SKIPPER, THE CREW MIGHT LEAVE THE SHIP. FIVE WORK BOATS WERE NOW IN THE AREA TO TAKE THE CREW OFF. AMOCO'S PREDICAMENT WAS THAT IT CANNOT EVACUATE THE CREW AND STILL KEEP THE SHIP ON LOCATION AS EGYPTIANS ARE DEMANDING.

4. IN ADDITION TO THE ISRAELI GUNBOATS EAST OF THE RIG, CRAIG RELATED, THE MARINER'S RADAR HAD REPORTED ANOTHER

ISRAELI GUNBOAT RAPIDLY APPROACHING FROM THE SOUTH. TWO UNIDENTIFIED, BUT PROBABLY ISRAELI, HELICOPTERS WERE ALSO IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. CONTRARY TO HIS EARLIER CLAIM, CRAIG INDICATED THAT, IF GOE ALLOWED RIG TO MOVE, IT COULD DO SO. IF GOE INSISTED UPON KEEPING SHIP ON LOCATION, CRAIG THOUGHT THE SKIPPER WOULD HAVE TO ASK FOR VOLUNTEERS. HE THOUGHT ALL SUCH VOLUNTEERS WOULD PROBABLY BE EXPATRIATES, BUT HE COULD NOT BE SURE. HE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO CONTACT MINPET HILAL, BUT HAD BEEN GETTING INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE MINISTER THROUGH SUBORDINATES ALONG THE LINES INDICATED ABOVE. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO. I TOLD HIM OF OUR REPRESENTATIONS IN TEL AVIV AND ALSO OF MY TALK WITH FAHMY, BUT HE NOTED QUITE CORRECTLY THAT FAHMY'S REACTION WAS NOT AT ALL HELPFUL IN TERMS OF SOLVING THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM.

5. AS I WAS WAITING FOR DUTY CAR TO TAKE ME TO THE EMBASSY TO REPORT ABOVE, CRAIG TELEPHONED A SECOND TIME (0100 LOCAL). HE REPORTED THAT AT ABOUT MIDNIGHT ISRAELI GUNBOAT HAD APPROACHED THE MARINER TO SAY THAT THE RIG HAD ONE HOUR TO MOVE OUT OF THE AREA. ABOUT THE SAME TIME, AN ISRAELI HELICOPTER GUN SHIP HAD CIRCLED THE MARINER. WITH THAT, THE SKIPPER OF THE MARINER HAD DECIDED TO MOVE THE RIG TO THE WEST. THE MARINER, ACCORDING TO CRAIG'S LAST WORD, IS NOW UNDER TOW MOVING IN A WESTERLY DIRECTION OUT OF THE AREA. CRAIG INDICATED THAT THE EGYPTIANS, INCLUDING THE MINISTER, HAD BEEN INFORMED. ACCORDING TO HIM, THEY ARE VERY UNHAPPY ABOUT THE DECISION TO MOVE THE RIG.

6. COMMENT: FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, THIS MINI-CRISIS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN RESOLVED. THE ISRAELIS HAVE WON, AND THE EGYPTIANS HAVE LOST. THE CREW IS PRESUMABLY CONFIDENTIAL

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SAFE, BUT WE MAY EXPECT GOE TO TRY TO EXACT SOME PINALTY AGAINST AMOCO FOR MOVING OUT. WE MAY ALSO EXPECT EGYPTIANS TO BE BITTER THAT WE HAVE NOT SUPPORTED THEM ON THIS ISSUE. THE SPIRIT OF SINAI II, TO THE EXTENT THERE EVER WAS ONE, HAS SUFFERED A SERIOUS BLOW. I WOULD EXPECT EGYPTIANS, FROM SADAT ON DOWN, TO BE SHARPLY CRITICAL OF OUR ROLE. GAMASY WILL DOUBTLESS MAKE THIS POINT TO ME TODAY, AS WILL FAHMY WHEN I MEET WITH HIM TOMORROW, IF HE DOWS NOT ALREADY CALL ME EARLIER. I WILL TRY TO LIMIT DAMAGE BY REITERATING TO EGYPTIANS THAT WE BELIEVE AMOCO WAS WITHIN ITS LEGAL RIGHTS IN OPERATING IN THE RAMADHAN FIELD, BUT THAT WE NOT THINK IT APPROPRIATE THAT THIS MATTER BE ARGUED OUT IN A MILITARY CONFRONTATION JEOPARDIZING AMERICAN LIVES. WHAT EGYPTIANS WILL REALLY EXPECT, HOWEVER, IS SOME VIGOROUS

ACTION ON OUR PART TO INDUCE ISRAELIS TO ALLOW AMOCO TO
DRILL AT DISPUTED 304.1 SITE.
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